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MOHAMMEDAN AND CHRISTIAN SANCTUARIES

After a final effort, producing eight inches of snow on February 24, and three inches of hail March 4, the winter has gradually given way to spring. Not being willing to lose time, however, we decided not to wait for the definite cessation of the rains to begin our trips through the country, but to set out March 14. During the previous month we had made a number of shorter excursions within a radius of ten miles from Jerusalem. In these minor journeys the prime object was to visit the holy sites and shrines of the region in the environs of Jerusalem. Nearly all the Muslim and many of the Christian sanctuaries were examined, and the natives questioned regarding their customs and usages in connection with the cult of prophets (*inbiya-anbiyâ'*) and holy men (*ûliya-auliyâ'*). Incidentally, the persistence of some very ancient rites and legends was established, and much folkloristic material of other sorts was gathered. The results of the investigation of wells and sacred places will be published by Professor McCown; it is the first elaborate and systematic treatment of the subject, following on the lines laid down by Professor Samuel Ives Curtis, whose pioneer work in this field placed American scholars under an obligation to continue the studies begun by their illustrious compatriot.

IMPORTANCE OF STUDYING PALESTINIAN FOLKLORE AT ONCE

Owing to the unprecedented rapidity of the economic and social evolution of Palestine today, where all races vie with one another in modernizing culture and beliefs, the thorough study of the folklore of Palestine is a matter of imperative necessity. Every year interesting and significant details pass into oblivion, and it is rare indeed to find a young peasant who knows much; in one village we were told, "The old men think so and so, but we boys don't think so." The importance of these studies for understanding the mind of the Palestinian peasant, in many respects no doubt like his Israelite and Canaanite predecessors, can hardly be overestimated. The interest of these researches for comparative religions may be illustrated by two facts: in Bethlehem, which, according to Epiphanius, was a center of Adonis worship in the Roman period, Adonis gardens are still prepared by some of the women, and set on the table for good luck every Easter; in Jôra, a village just off the site of ancient Ashkelon, the vernal procession of the goddess Atargatis from her temple to the sea, where her statue received a bath, still survives in a slightly modified form. We are on the track of much interesting material in various branches of the field of folklore, especially in village legendary cycles and Bedu law, which is still administered by the mukhtars of Judaea, as well as by the sheikhs of the Negeb. The Director is now coöoperating in these researches with a number of Syrian folklorists, especially four, Dr. Tewfik Canaan, Mr. Elias N. Haddad, Hanna Stephan, and Omar Effendi Barghuti, a young Muslim scholar of extraordinary promise and ability. He is also projecting, with Mr. E. N. Haddad, a new grammar and conversation book of Palestinian Arabic, in the international phonetic alphabet, as employed by Canon Gairdner for Egyptian Arabic.

A TRIP ON THE DEAD SEA

March 14-18 we joined a party from Jerusalem and Ramallah, hired a motor boat, and traveled the length of the Dead Sea and back.

With a large party this trip can now be made at a purely nominal expense. Owing to lack of time and adverse winds, which lashed the waters of the sea until it became quite choppy, not as many points could be visited as might have been wished, but we stopped for some time at Engedi and the mouth of the Arnon, as well as at the salt cave under Jebel Usdum (Mount Sodom). A very interesting experience was camping out under the shelter of Jebel Usdum, at the southern end of the Dead Sea, where we proved to our own satisfaction that Dead Sea drift-wood burns admirably, despite the frequent denials of this fact published in the manuals. Aside from Masada the archaeological interest of such a trip is not great, and the shores are too desolate to give an opportunity for folkloristic research. On the other hand, the natural beauty of the scenery is great, especially along the Moabite coast, where the cliffs strive to emulate the handiwork of man in their hues and odd configurations. Not a few archaeologists have been led by natives to supposed sculptures and inscriptions in this region, only to find on examination that Nature had played some of her strange pranks.

CENTRAL JUDAEA AND THE MARITIME PLAIN

The day after our return from the Dead Sea (March 19) we left Jerusalem for a ride through central Judaea and the coastal plain. The purpose of this trip was archaeological, topographical, and folkloristic, and the six days we devoted to it were well rewarded in each of these directions. During the first two days, on the road between Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Hebron, and Beit-Jibrîn, a good deal of rain fell, making travel rather unpleasant, but as soon as we got down from the highland into the foothills, or Shephelah, beautiful weather prevailed. In general the rainfall is heaviest on the highest ground.

TOMBS OF BEIT JIBRIN

We stayed in Beit-Jibrîn two nights, spending the intervening day in a careful examination of the tombs in the vicinity. Thanks to the care of the Department of Antiquities, the famous painted tombs are now kept locked, and they were found in good condition, except that the colors have faded. To our surprise and pleasure we found that the inscriptions are all in good condition, but we took the opportunity to collate them again. Even the curious exchange of notes between two lovers, hastily scrawled on the soft limestone walls of the most important tomb more than two thousand years ago, is still legible throughout, except in one place. We further measured and made drawings and a photograph of the pillar-altars, which have been hitherto neglected, despite their great interest to comparative religion. In addition the inscriptions in a previously unpublished tomb were carefully copied. Without doubt a thorough survey of this region would still bring to light important undiscovered tombs. The publication of the Gerza Papyri by Mr. Edgar has thrown interesting light on the origin of this Sidonian colony in the heart of the Shephelah, established in the third century B. C. as a station on the caravan route from the land of the Nabataeans to the port of Joppa. New discoveries may contribute notably to our knowledge of the history and the religion of the Phœnician settlement in Eleutheropolis, and it is in just such a place that we may expect to find inscriptions illustrating apostolic Christianity.